

A Model of Organizational Socialization and Turnover Intention

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Abstract—This paper tries to clarify the relationship between organizational socialization and staff retention by using four dimensions of socialization (precursors) and one outcome variable (turnover intention), and to demonstrate the mediator role of employees' work dedication in this relationship. Data were collected from 395 employees in two major telecommunications organizations in a southern city in mainland China, and the proposed model has been analyzed using a structural equation modeling methodology. All the four dimensions (Training, Understanding, Coworker Support, and Future Prospects) of the organizational socialization were positively related to employees' work dedication, and work dedication was negatively related to turnover intention. The relationship between organizational socialization and turnover intention was mediated by employee work dedication. Limitations, management implications, and future research were discussed.

Keywords—organizational socialization, training, understanding, coworker support, future prospects, work dedication, turnover intention

I. INTRODUCTION

Turnover is perhaps one of the most commonly studied variables in the human resource literature, because it is costly and disruptive to an organization, yet it is potentially avoidable and controllable. Dalton and Todor (1993) stated in their research on turnover and organizational control: "If it is to be reduced, then voluntary turnover must be under organizational control" (p. 203). Wiley (1993) suggested that voluntary turnover could be caused by a number of reasons including poor job feedback, job dissatisfaction, performance problems, situation constraints, socialization difficulties, job stress, and insufficient promotional opportunities. Reduced levels of turnover is often suggested to be a major outcome of job satisfaction because satisfaction often leads to commitment but not turnover. Organizations are supposed to adopt effective HR practices to satisfy employees, and to retain their valuable human resources.

Intention to leave is a good predictor of actual leaving and most of the time is accurate (Zenger, 1992). Price (2001) reported significant positive relationships between leaving intentions and actual leaving behavior, and intent to leave was the greatest predictor of staying or leaving behavior. Turnover intention is, therefore, often the surrogate for turnover. This study used turnover intention to represent possible turnover rate in organizations.

A. Organizational Socialization

Unsuccessful socialization can be extremely expensive as turnover is often the ultimate result (Bauer, Morrison, & Callister, 1998). Organizations often spend considerable time and money recruiting and training new employees. For some professional jobs, new employees are trained for weeks or even months before they can effectively perform their jobs. During this training period, they receive full payment but make relatively few contributions to the organization. If they quit right after the training, the organization will have little or no return on its investment, and will have to take the burden of conducting the recruitment and selection process again. Good socialization, however, may help the organization to retain valuable employees and save considerable cost.

Fisher (1986) noted that the outcomes of socialization process could be different. She suggested that socialization may have a long-term impact on employees, and that successful socialization should result in employee satisfaction and commitment, whereas unsuccessful socialization may lead to dissatisfaction and turnover.

Socialization is also the primary process by which organizational culture is transmitted and maintained. If socialization is effective, new employees understand and adopt the organization's values and norms. Organizations may benefit from the continuity of these values and norms. Moreover, effective socialization ensures better cooperation among employees (Louis, 1980).

Taormina (1997) suggested that organizational socialization has four content domains, namely: (1) "training," which refers to the development of job-related skills and abilities; (2) "understanding," that is the ability to apply knowledge about the nature, significance, or explanation of the various aspects of what goes on in the workplace; (3) "coworker support," which refers to the emotional, moral, or instrumental sustenance that is provided to them (without financial compensation) by other employees in the organization; and (4) "future prospects," which refers to an employee's anticipation of having a rewarding career within the employing organization.

There is ample empirical and theoretical literature indicating that all four of the socialization domains have favorable correlations with job performance (Randall, et al., 1999). In turn, job performance should have a direct relation to work dedication and turnover intention.

Training has always been considered as one of the important parts of human resource management, and it has a

direct effect on employee performance. Bernardin and Beatty's (1984) human resource management model demonstrates that through selection, training, development, placement, and motivation, an organization could achieve effectiveness and efficiency among its human resources. Ideally, organizational training programs should allow employees to improve necessary skills for superior performance, and acquire new skills for new jobs or advanced positions. Employees regard training as an investment their organizations provides to them, and they usually appreciate it with gratitude. It is, therefore, hypothesized that:

H(1): The more highly employees evaluate the Training in their companies, the more they will be dedicated to their jobs.

H(2): Training is negatively related to employees' turnover intention.

Understanding is the general term Taormina (1997) used for what other researchers (Fisher, 1986; Ostroff & Kozlowski, 1992) have called "learning" or "information-seeking." These behaviors enable the employees to know what the organization does, how things are done in the organization, and why things are being done in certain ways. Reio and Wiswell (2000) studied the relationships among adult curiosity, workplace learning, and job performance. They reported that curiosity-induced behavior, such as information seeking, played a major role in workplace learning and job performance. Similar to training, employees who have a better understanding of their organization should be more dedicated to their jobs and have lower turnover intention. Following this line, it is hypothesized that:

H(3): The more highly employees evaluate their Understanding in their companies, the more they will be dedicated to their jobs.

H(4): Understanding is negatively related to employees' turnover intention.

Many studies support the positive relationship between Coworker Support and favorable job performance (Staw, Sutton, & Pelled, 1994). They argue that good interpersonal relationships with coworkers will help to achieve positive outcomes, including increased productivity, and improved performance. Randall, Cropanzano, Bormann, and Birjulin (1999) reported that support was positively related to job performance, which has direct relevance to work dedication and turnover intention. Thus, the following hypotheses were set:

H(5): The more highly employees evaluate the Coworker Support in their companies, the more they will be dedicated to their jobs.

H(6): Coworker Support is negatively related to employees' turnover intention.

Future prospects refers to the employees' expectations about continued employment and opportunities for promotion, bonuses, and other types of rewards. Theoretically, rewards should increase job satisfaction, and improve job performance. Fairburn and Malcomson (2001) proposed that promotions motivate employees, and help them to grow professionally, which should lead to increased productivity. When employees perceive that they will have a rewarding future in the

organization, they will be more dedicated to their jobs and less likely to leave. Hypotheses were formulated as follows:

H(7): The more highly employees evaluate the Future Prospects in their companies, the more they will be dedicated to their jobs.

H(8): Future Prospects is negatively related to employees' turnover intention.

B. Work Dedication

Work dedication was one of the four performance factors identified by Gao and Taormina (2003) in a study to explore acceptable employee performance appraisal criteria.

The items that composed this factor represented a combination of work behaviors that are encouraged in eastern culture and some that are common in western culture. Some items are believed to represent Chinese Values, such as loyalty and being hard working. Naturally, it is suggested that the relationship between organizational socialization and turnover intention is mediated by work dedication:

H(9): The relationship between organizational socialization (Training (a), Understanding (b), Coworker Support (c), and Future Prospects (d)) and turnover intention is mediated by work dedication.

II. METHODOLOGY

A. Respondents

Data were collected from 395 full time employees (184 males, 209 females, and 2 unspecified) in two major telecommunications organizations in a southern city in mainland China. All the employees were ethnic Chinese, aged from 17 to 50 years ($M=26.5$, $SD=5.66$). Most respondents (72.80%) had completed secondary school, with the remainder (27.20%) having completed tertiary or graduate school education. The respondents had spent an average of 4.13 years ($SD=4.49$) in their current jobs.

B. Materials

The questionnaire was designed to assess four topic areas, namely: (1) the employee's demographics; (2) Organizational socialization; (3) Work dedication; and (4) Turnover intention. The demographics section asked for information about respondents' gender, age, education level, and number of years at their current job.

1) Organizational Socialization

Organizational socialization was assessed with Taormina's (1994) 20-item Organizational Socialization Inventory (OSI). The OSI measures respondents' evaluations of four domains of the socialization construct. Reliability scores on the original OSI were .76 for Training, .79 for Understanding, .81 for Coworker support, and .76 for Future prospects.

2) Work Dedication.

This was measured using a 11-item scale developed by Gao and Taormina (2003). They were either single words (e.g., "persistence," and "loyalty,") or short phrases (e.g.,

“helpfulness toward others,” and “hard working,”). The original alpha reliability for this variable was .93.

3) Turnover Intention

Keller's (1984) four item scale was used in this study. Sample question include: “I often think of quitting my present job,” and “I expect to leave this company within next year.” The original reliability was reported to be .67.

4) Language of the Questionnaire

All the items were translated from the original English into Chinese by a bilingual professor at a language school. Another bilingual professor at the same university examined the translated items for their English meaning and evaluated the two versions as equivalent.

C. Procedure

The questionnaires were handed to 500 employees in each of the two telecommunications organizations as they were leaving their workplace after finishing work in the late afternoon. The employees were approached individually and asked to complete the questionnaire. The cover page briefly explained the purpose of this study and guaranteed confidentiality. A stamped, return-addressed envelope was attached to each questionnaire to encourage reply. A total of 395 completed questionnaires were returned. Therefore, the overall return rate was 39.50%.

III. RESULTS

A. Mean Scores, Scale Reliabilities and Correlations

The mean scores were: Training=3.15, SD=1.00; Understanding=3.68, SD=.89; Coworker support=3.55, SD=.88; and Future prospects=2.79, SD=.92. Reliabilities for the socialization dimensions were .82 for Training; .78 for Understanding; .75 for Coworker support; and .75 for Future prospects. Work Dedication and Turnover Intention had alphas of .88 and .75, respectively. All the variables plus the demographics were then entered into a correlations matrix, shown in Table 1.

The high positive correlation between Work Dedication and the four organizational socialization dimensions (for Training, $r=.39$, $p<.001$; for Understanding, $r=.58$, $p<.001$; for Coworker support, $r=.53$, $p<.001$, and for Future prospects, $r=.20$, $p<.005$), and the significant negative correlation between them (for Training, $r=-.18$, $p<.01$; for Understanding, $r=-.23$, $p<.005$; Coworker Support, $r=-.23$, $p<.005$; and for Future Prospects, $r=-.25$, $p<.001$) and Turnover Intention lent strong support to H(1) to H(8).

B. Structural Model

Figure 1 shows the structural theoretical model with all the path estimates presented. The model fit the data quite well, as the fit indices were quite good: GFI = 0.923; NFI = 0.934; CFI = 0.978; RMR = 0.051; and RMSEA = 0.037. In addition, all of the path estimates were significant and in the expected direction. As hypothesized, the relationship between organizational socialization and Turnover Intention was mediated by Work Dedication, thus, lent strong support to

H(9a) to H(9d). Moreover, future prospects revealed significant and direct effect on turnover intention.

TABLE I

Variable	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Training	3.15	1.00	(.82)									
2. Understanding	3.68	.89	.65	(.78)								
3. Coworker Support	3.55	.88	.61	.76	(.75)							
4. Future Prospects	2.79	.92	.68	.50	.53	(.75)						
5. Work Dedication	4.08	.66	.39	.58	.53	.20	(.88)					
6. Turnover Intention	2.56	.93	-.18	-.23	-.23	-.25	-.28	(.75)				
7. Gender	.39	.49	.08	.01	.07	.07	-.01	.04	---			
8. Age	26.5	5.66	.01	.02	.02	-.01	-.03	-.08	.28	---		
9. Education	2.58	.60	.01	.02	.01	.06	.07	.08	.28	.11	---	
10. Years of Work	4.13	4.49	-.01	.03	.01	-.03	-.04	-.08	.26	.73	.08	---

IV. DISCUSSION

Staff retention is one of the most researched variables in the HR literature. The importance of its strategic connotation needs empirical research to explore effective HR practices (precursors) to retain high added value staff. The intention of this study was to select four organizational socialization dimensions and one outcome variable (turnover intention), and try to show the mediator roll of employee work dedication in this relationship. SEM methodology was used in this study, as SEM is particularly effective when testing models that are path analytic with mediating variables, and contain latent constructs that are being measured with multiple indicators.

Turnover continues to be a problem for businesses today. The proposed model suggests the use of specific organizational practices, i.e., Training, Understanding, and Coworker Support that enhance employee work dedication as an intermediate step to lower turnover intention. This indicates that companies that

provide their employees with good training and orientation programs and offer supportive working environments can engender better job performance and reduce turnover intention.

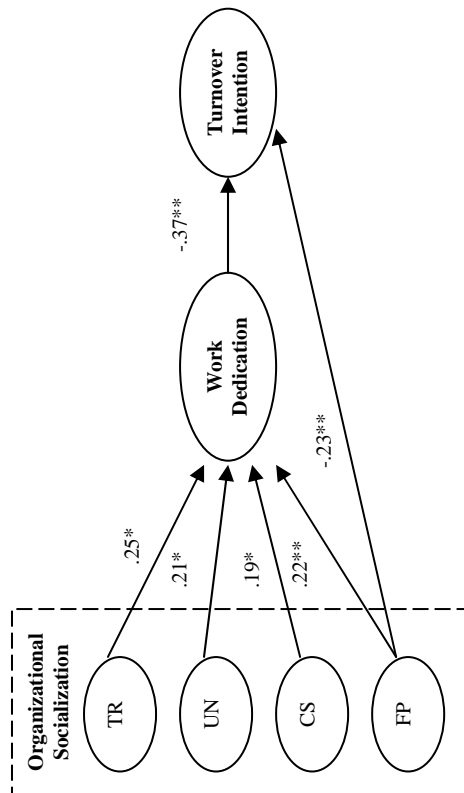


Fig. 1 Structural Equation Model

The proposed model makes clear the importance of Future Prospects in turnover intention. It is proved to be a precursor in both direct and indirect ways. This confirms the importance of organizational HR policies, in particular, organizations need to care for employees' career development, and provide growth opportunities for advancement to keep their valuable staff.

Work Dedication is seen to have a great impact on turnover intention. This reveals again that employees' positive attitude toward work significantly affects their retention. In order to increase work dedication among employees, management needs to establish a complete socialization program with all dimensions.

A limitation of the findings is the use of self-report questionnaires to collect data on all measures. Besides, generalization may be a problem as data were collected from two organizations in China. Future research should identify more measures of HR practices at both organizational and

individual level, and with larger sample sizes, the proposed model could be tested in different industries and cultures.

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